

Women and HIV

Every woman deserves to be safe from HIV. Use the facts about HIV to protect your health.

Take control of your health

Women often take care of others. Now is the time to take care of yourself! The more you take steps to protect yourself from HIV, the safer you will be. You deserve to be safe from HIV.

- **Be tested for HIV.** If you are infected with HIV, it is important for you to have medical care and treatment as soon as possible. Call the AIDS Action Committee Hotline at **1-800-235-2331** to find out about confidential and anonymous HIV testing services.
- **Get regular medical care.** If you do not have a health care provider, walk-in services are available at many community health centers, women's health centers, and hospitals. Women over 40 with low incomes and who are uninsured may be able to get free physical exams (call the Women's Health Network at **1-877-414-4447**).
- **Decide to have safer sex.** If you think your sex partner may be putting you at risk for HIV infection, call the toll-free numbers listed on the back of this pamphlet for information on where to get support.

Tips to help protect you from HIV

Although abstinence, or not having sexual intercourse, is the best way to prevent HIV, remember that you can still protect yourself if you have sex.

- Using a latex condom can protect you from HIV.
- Two types of condoms work well: latex condoms (in small packets) and female condoms (called the Reality female condom). Choose which is best for you and use it every time you have sex.
- Keep a supply of condoms with you so you are always prepared.
- Use only a water-based lubricant. Oils, petroleum jelly, or hand and body lotion make condoms break.

- Oral sex is less risky than vaginal or anal sex without a condom.

HIV counseling and testing

A woman can be infected with HIV for several years without knowing it. Find out if you have HIV, and take care of your health.

HIV counseling and testing services are easy to find in Massachusetts. Call the AIDS Action Committee Hotline at **1-800-235-2331** to find out where you can go for testing and support services. No one else has to know that you are being tested.

Pregnancy and HIV

HIV may be transmitted to your baby during pregnancy, delivery, or by breastfeeding. Get tested for HIV so you can make healthy choices for you and your baby.

- See a health care provider as early as possible if you are pregnant. You may be able to get free prenatal care in Massachusetts (call WIC at **1-800-942-1007**).
- Your health care provider can test you for HIV during your prenatal visit.
- If you do not have a health care provider, call **1-800-235-2331** to find out about HIV testing.
- If you are HIV-positive, ask about medical treatments, such as the drug AZT. AZT can help protect your baby from becoming infected with HIV.

HIV

causes

AIDS

HIV is found in the blood, semen, vaginal fluids, or breast milk of someone infected with HIV.

Women can get HIV by:

- Having vaginal or anal sex without a condom or latex barrier with someone who has HIV. (Oral sex is less risky unless there are sores in your mouth.)
- Sharing needles or works, including needles for tattooing or piercing.
- Having vaginal or anal sex without using a condom or latex barrier with someone who shares needles.

Birth control pills, diaphragms, and IUDs (Intra-Uterine Devices) may protect women from pregnancy, but do not protect women from HIV. A condom is the Safest choice

Resources for Women

More information is available. All calls are confidential.

AIDS Action Committee Hotline
1-800-235-2331 (English, Spanish)
TTY: 617-437-1672

Information, support, and referrals on HIV/AIDS, STD's, and Hepatitis transmissions, testing, and treatment

First Call for Help
1-800-231-4377

Information and referrals on a wide variety of services, including HIV, domestic violence, and women's health

Massachusetts Substance Abuse Information and Education Helpline
1-800-327-5050
TTY: 617-536-5872

Information and referrals to treatment and self-help groups

Women's Health Network
1-877-414-4447
TTY: 617-624-5992

Provides free physical exams and health screenings to eligible women in Massachusetts who are over 40 and uninsured or underinsured

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